

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) was awarded the George Bush Medal for the Empowerment of People with Disabilities last night at the National Council on Disability's 15th Anniversary Observance of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Former President George H.W. Bush presented him with the award. As the lead sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in the House of Representatives, Congressman Hoyer shepherded the ADA to overwhelming approval. Over the past 15 years, Hoyer has fought to ensure that the promise of the ADA is fulfilled for all people with disabilities.

Congressman Hoyer released the following statement today, on the 15th Anniversary of the ADA's enactment:

"I am deeply honored to receive this award, joining the ranks of dedicated champions of the disability movement, such as the late Justin Dart, Jr., former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, disability activist Patricia Wright, and several others.

"Fifteen years ago today – the day President George H.W. Bush signed the bipartisan Americans With Disabilities Act into law – was one of my proudest moments in public service.

"For far too long, people with disabilities suffered the cold chill of exclusion. But with the enactment of the ADA – the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities – the warm breeze of inclusion began to sweep across America.

"Over the last 15 years, there is no doubt that the physical landscape has changed for people with disabilities. Ramps, curb cuts, Braille signs, captioned televisions and chair lifts are just a few examples.

"However, despite our progress, it is clear that the promise of the ADA remains unfulfilled for too many Americans with disabilities. Only about one-third of people with disabilities are employed. They are three times more likely to live in poverty. And, the Supreme Court, in several decisions, has failed to give the ADA the broad interpretation that Congress intended when we passed it.

“Today, we must renew our commitment to the principles and spirit of the ADA, and recognize that our work is not done. The ADA allowed us to tear down the wall of exclusion and pour a strong foundation for the house of equality. But that house is still being built.

“The promise of the ADA remains unfulfilled, but is still within reach.”

*The George Bush Medal Committee was established by the disability community in 1992 and is intended to reinforce the nation’s commitment to keeping the promise of the ADA to all Americans and to encourage the spirit of ADA throughout the world.*

*NCD is an independent federal agency making recommendations to the President and Congress on disability policy issues and representing people with disabilities on policy matters. It was established as an independent agency in 1984, and the Council drafted early versions of the ADA.*

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